1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

CHAPTER TWO

Trumaí Subsistence and Technology

Vital Statistics

The population of the Trumaí village in 1938 was 43. This figure includes the 3 foreign women in residence and excludes those few Trumaí who were living with other groups. There were 17 men, 16 women, and 10 pre-pubescent children, of whom 8 were male and only 2 were female. Due to the previously mentioned capture and forced marriage of Trumaí women, the average age of females seems to have been considerably greater than that of males. Two men were considered by the Trumaí as old, while four women were placed in that category. This disparity of age undoubtedly had an influence on the Trumaí birth rate.

Infant mortality seems to have been high, and Quain was of the opinion that it was further aggravated by abortion and infanticide. The fact that there were eight male children and but two girls suggests that infanticide must have been practiced only upon females. Quain's notes, however, give no indication that this was the fact. Pulmonary diseases have devastated all the groups of the upper Xingú, but the drop in the Trumaí population from 43 in 1938 to 25 in 1948 is probably not paralleled in the other villages during that time.

Village and Gardens

The Trumaí settlement was located a scant half-mile from a lagoon that opened directly upon the east shore of the Kuluene just a few miles away. The mouth of the lagoon was narrow, but it broadened out into a lake of moderate size with many small bays and was ringed with swamps. Proximity to the river made insects a continual nuisance during the rainy season. The Kamayurá village, located near the sandy beaches of a lagoon lined with *buriti* palms, was relatively free of insects.

The village consisted of four houses and another under construction. Between the houses and the surrounding forest lay an area of weeds and low underbrush into which refuse was thrown. The ground within the ring of houses was kept comparatively free of weeds and litter. The village "plaza" was about 200 feet wide. In the center were the log bench and fireplace of the men's gathering place. Nearby was a conical wicker cage in which the village harpy eagle was kept for its feathers, which were used in ceremonies.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

Older boys and men went into the forest to cut down the trees and bring the boughs back to the village. The men then took turns in pounding the boughs into coarse fiber with the blunt end of an axe. Even men who did not participate in the gathering of the boughs helped in their reduction into fiber.

The group nature of the work is understandable in view of the communal labor and benefits involved in fish poisoning. Once the boughs were reduced, the fibers were cut into sheaves of about two and one-half feet in length. These sheaves were used to poison the water. Interestingly, both bark and wood were pounded up together, although, according to Quain, only the bark is poisonous.

The *buriti* palm supplied two raw materials, *isinke* and *isinke hut'*. *Isinke* was obtained from the heart of the young spike of the growing tip of the palm. The top was separated to give access to the heart, and long fibers were pulled out, which were then hung in the interior of the house to dry. When dry they resembled a heavy hemp, and were used to make cord. *Isinke hut'* is the leaf of the *buriti*, which was used in basketry.

Hunting

Hunting was not important at any time during Quain's stay. Tapir, peccary, deer, monkey, jaguar, squirrel and paca, a large rodent, are among the animals mentioned by Quain as being found in the vicinity, but only the monkey and paca were eaten. Birds were also eaten, and their feathers were used for ornamentation. Terrapin were caught by hand, either by creeping up on them or by swimming close to them under water and grabbing them by the shell. All other game was shot with the bow and arrow, except for the capybara, called *tsimo* by the Trumaí. Canoeists speared the swimming animals. The spear was used at no other time in hunting or fishing, although the Yaulapití speared fish.

Quain saw no organized hunting parties. One or two men sometimes set out with the express intention of hunting, but most animals were shot while on fishing or gathering expeditions. The Trumaí did not rely on meat, nor did they show a craving for it. Hunting seemed to be more a pastime and sport than a subsistence activity. When Quain hunted with the Trumaí he noticed that they wanted him to kill birds more for their feathers than for their meat. They also wanted him to kill several entirely worthless birds because, as two of the men expressed it, they wanted "to see it."

Foods

The horticulture, fishing and gathering economy of the Trumaí gave them a fair variety and adequate quantity of food during most of the year, barring crop failure. The Trumaí, however, had a considerably

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

it before it rots. The Trumaí worked hard at this, and Quain heard the sounds of women boiling and stirring the *ke'jau* far into the night. Some of the *ke'jau* was placed in gourds for immediate use. It was mixed with water, making a rich yellow drink, and was frequently stirred into the manioc gruel, or *ats aek*. *Ke'jau* was considered an excellent food for canoe trips, and was carried by fishermen and travelers.

The *piquí* fruit when roasted whole "tastes like egg yolk, or, vaguely, like deviled eggs," Quain wrote. In addition to cooking the pulp of the fruit, the kernel of the *piquí* pit was used. It was sometimes eaten raw, but usually it was cooked. The kernel has a fragrant, coconut-like flavor. A pudding was made by boiling down *piquí* kernels to the consistency of paste and, to Quain, the flavor was much like that of the caramelized coconut sauce prepared in Fiji. Another preparation called *t'ak*, which resembled *beijú*, was made from a flour prepared from *piquí* kernels. Fish and various other foods were piled on top of the *t'ak* and eaten with it, or pieces of the cake were broken off and eaten plain.

Maize, beans, and squash were grown in the Trumaí gardens, but due to the season none of these was eaten during Quain's stay. While making house inventories he saw small amounts of maize and beans stored in gourds sealed with tree gum, undoubtedly to be used as seed. Two varieties of maize were eaten. The more common type was called *xotet*; the other was a red species known as *hy kapsik*.

Pineapples and bananas did not figure importantly in the diet. Although the Trumaí grew sugar cane (*kanaviya*), there is no information on its use. Sweet potatoes were roasted by the men, but were probably prepared in other ways also. A paste was made from cotton seeds by pounding them in a mortar and then boiling the mashed seeds. The paste was kept in a gourd and eaten by scooping it up with the fingers.

Quain's notes contain little on the preparation of wild foods other than *piquí* fruit. Guava were eaten raw, but there is no information on how the various kinds of palm fruits were prepared.

The abdomen of a large ant called *xokoldomat'ek* was considered a delicacy, and flying ants were popped into the mouth like peanuts. A tremendous green grasshopper with long horns (*tawarero*) was roasted and eaten. A small red tick (*tekwu*) was also consumed, but a fuzzy caterpillar known as the *ma'yryr* was looked upon with revulsion. The Trumaí claimed contemptuously that only the Suyá ate them.

It would appear that the Trumaí seldom drank plain water. Instead, beverages such as the manioc or *piquí* drinks were used. A gourdful of one of these drinks was usually available in the houses, and a supply was taken on canoe trips. No intoxicating beverages were made, but Quain was told by a former captive of the Yuruna that the Yuruna brew "kills you for a day or two, and they stay up all night shouting and singing." The informant did not approve of its taste or effects.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

881 the banks, while men crowded into a canoe. The reptile was located, but
866 instead of the one-foot diameter that it was at first said to have, it turned out to be only three inches thick. But, as Quain laconically observed, it was hungry. The men shouted at Jawaku to jump in the water and grab it.

The boy approached the reptile cautiously and with obvious fear. The
[136] anaconda, aroused, slithered through the water to the other side of the lagoon. Jawaku's unwillingness to fight was now apparent. There were shouts that he was frightened. These goads temporarily overcame his reluctance, and he waded through the water and grabbed the snake around the middle, lifting it out of the water. The anaconda began throwing its coils, while striking at the boy. In a panic, Jawaku stumbled blindly for the shore, tripped over a log, and released his hold on the snake. All the men shouted, "He's afraid!" as the crestfallen boy dragged himself out of the water and silently walked home.

That night, Maibu made a lengthy speech in which he absolved himself from any responsibility for Jawaku's cowardice. The next day another reptile was sighted, but Jawaku did not even bother to look at it.

881 On the other hand, Autsuki measured up to what was expected of him, and thus was able to continue the ritual that marked his maturation. Immediately upon the successful outcome of his struggle with an anaconda, he went to his house. He had now entered the seclusion phase
[604] of his puberty rites. Tun, his mother's brother, who was acting as next of kin, built a partition screening him off from the rest of the house. He was allowed nothing to eat but a medicinal preparation called *wyryx*, and he could leave his confinement to defecate only when everyone was asleep.

881 The seclusion period was to last until the ear-piercing festival which
304 was to be held several months later, but Autsuki was cheerful about it. In accordance with normal practice, he had his arms scraped shortly after he entered confinement, and he was also given the adult tonsure.

881 There remained only one more step in the cycle of initiation rites:
868 initiation into the shamanistic art of curing. Completion of this final
756 phase was necessary for full participation in the men's circle and for the privilege of smoking tobacco.[1] All of the uninitiated Trumaí youths
[876] knew how to smoke and occasionally did so, but the adults referred to
[195] this as "lying smoking." In order to "really" smoke it was necessary to have a ceremony performed by Matiwana. Exactly when this occurred is open to question, but ideally it was supposed to follow the final seclusion and ear-piercing. Aloari had not yet had the ceremony performed, although he was married and had a child. In his own words, he was still "too young." Aloari was evidently equating maturation with the puberty rites.

[1] Oberg (1953, p. 60) reports that uninitiated men may not smoke among the Kamayurá, either.